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THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIETIES OF 1793 AND 1794 IN
KENTUCKY, PENNSYLVANIA AND VIRGINIA.¹*FELLOW-CITIZEN.*

THE Democratic Society of Kentucky have directed us to transmit to you the Address and Remonstrance which accompany this letter. The subject of those papers is highly interesting to the Western People. We flatter ourselves that the measures recommended in the Address will meet your approbation; and that you will exert your influence to induce your neighbouring fellow-citizens to give their sanction to the Remonstrance.

The Remonstrance when signed, may be transmitted to the representative in Congress from your district, or to any other member of that body, delegated from the Western Country. It is intended that a decision upon this subject should be obtained during the present Session of Congress, and to effect this, it is necessary that the Remonstrance should be presented as soon as possible.

The inclosed Resolution of the Democratic society is one on which we are directed to request your sentiments; and should you approve it we promise ourselves that you will assist in carrying it into effect.

WILLIAM MURRAY,
JAMES HUGHES,
JAMES BROWN,
JAMES MOORE,
ROBERT TODD,

} Committee of
Correspondence

December 31, 1793.

To George Muter

“RESOLVED, That it will be proper to make an attempt in a peaceable manner, to go with an American bottom properly registered and cleared, into the sea through the channel of the

¹These documents are printed from manuscripts in the Library of Congress.

Mississippi; that we may either procure an immediate acknowledgment of our right from the Spaniards; or if they obstruct us in the enjoyment of that right, that we may be able to lay before the Federal Government, such unequivocal proofs of their having done so, that they will be compelled to say, whether they will abandon or protect the inhabitants of the western country."

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To the Inhabitants of the United States West of the Allegany and Apalachian Mountains.

Fellow Citizens.

The Democratic Society of Kentucky having had under consideration the measures necessary to obtain the exercise of your right to the free navigation of the Mississippi, have determined to address you upon that important Topic. In so doing, they think, that, they only use the undoubted right of Citizens to consult for their common welfare. This measure is not dictated by party or faction, it is the consequence of unavoidable necessity. It has become so, from the neglect shewn by the general Government, to obtain for those of the Citizens of the United States, who are interested therein, the Navigation of that River.

In the Present age, when the rights of man have been fully investigated and declared, by the voice of Nations, and, more particularly, in America, where those rights were first developed and declared, it will not be necessary to prove, that, the free Navigation of the Mississippi is the natural rights of the Inhabitants of the Country watered by its streams. It cannot be believed, that the beneficent God of Nature would have blessed this Country with unparalleled fertility, and furnished it with a number of navigable streams, and that, that fertility should be consumed at home, and those streams should not convey its superabundance to other climes. Far from it: for if we examine the wise diversity of the Earth as to Climate and production, Lands, seas and Rivers we must discover the glorious plan of infinite beneficence to unite by this exchange of their surplus, various Nations and connect

the ends of the Earth, in the bands of commerce and mutual good offices. From the Everlasting decrees of Providence, then, we derive this right: And must be criminal either to surrender or suffer it to be taken from us, without the most arduous struggles. But this right is ours, not only from nature but compact. We do not mean to urge this, as if a compact could give an additional sanction to a natural right; but to shew that our claim is derived from every source, which can give it validity. The Navigation of the Mississippi was solemnly given and confirmed, by great Britain, to the Citizens of the United States, by the provisional articles entered into, at Paris, between the two Nations. More than Eleven years have since elapsed, during which we have been denied the exercise of a right, founded upon such irrefragible grounds. What has been done by the former or present Government, during that period, on our behalf? In the former, we have been able to learn of no attempt to procure from the King of Spain, even an acknowledgement of our right. Repeated memorials were presented to Congress upon this Subject, but they were treated with a neglect bordering on contempt. They were laid upon the Table, there to rest in endless oblivion. Once indeed, we know, this Subject was introduced into Congress, under the former Government; but it was by an unwarrantable and disgraceful proposition to barter away our right. The Proposition was not adopted; the attempt being rendered abortive by the Spirited and patriotic opposition of a part of the Union. The time at length came, when the voice of the people called for a change in the General Government; and the present Constitution of the United States was adopted. We then flattered ourselves that our rights would be protected; for we were taught to believe, that the former loose and weak confederation having been done away, the new Government would possess the requisite energy. Memorials upon the subject were renewed, six years have passed away and our right is not yet obtained. Money is to be taken from us by an odious and oppressive Excise: but the means of procuring it, by the exercise of our just right, is denied. In the mean while our Brethren, on the Eastern Waters, possess every advantage which Nature or contract can give them. Nay, we do not know

that even one firm attempt to obtain it has been made. Alas! Is the Energy of our Government not to be exerted against our Enemies? Is it all to be reserved for her Citizens?

Experience, Fellow Citizens, has shown us that the general Government is unwilling, that we should obtain the navigation of the River Mississippi. A local policy appears to have an undue weight in the Councils of the Union. It seems to be the object of that Policy to prevent the population of this country: which would draw from the Eastern States their industrious Citizens. This conclusion inevitably follows from a consideration of the measures taken to prevent the purchase of and settlement of the lands bordering on the Mississippi. Among those measures, the unconstitutional interference, which rescinded sales, by one of the States to private Individuals, makes a striking object. And, perhaps, the fear of a successful rivalry in every Article of their Exports may have its weight. But if they are not unwilling to do us justice, they are at least regardless of our rights and welfare. We have found prayers and supplications of no avail, and should we continue to load the Table of Congress with Memorials, from, a part only, of the Western Country, it is too probable, they would meet with a fate, similar to those which have been formerly presented. Let us, then, all unite our endeavors in the common cause. Let all join, in a firm and manly remonstrance to the President and Congress of the United States, stating our just and Undoubted right to the Navigation of the Mississippi, remonstrating against the conduct of Government with regard to that right which must have been occasioned by local policy or neglect and demanding of them speedy and effectual exertions for its attainment. We cannot doubt, that you will cordially and unanimously join in this measure. It can hardly be necessary to remind you, that considerable quantities of Beef, Pork, flour, Hemp, Tobacco &c the produce of this Country remain on hand for want of purchasers, or are sold at inadequate prices. Much greater quantities might be raised, if the Inhabitants were encouraged by the certain sale, which the free navigation of the Mississippi would afford. An additional increase of those articles and a greater variety of produce and manufactures would be supplied, by means of the encouragement, which

the attainment of that great object would give to Immigration. But it is not only your own rights, which you are to regard. Remember that your posterity have a claim to your exertions to obtain and secure that right. (Let not your memory be stigmatized with a neglect of duty). Let not History record, that the Inhabitants of this beautiful country lost a most invaluable right and half the benefits bestowed upon it, by a bountiful Providence, through your neglect and supineness. The present crisis is favourable. Spain is engaged in a war, which requires all her forces. If the present golden opportunity be suffered to pass without advantage, and she shall have concluded a peace with France, we must then contend against her undivided strength.

But, what may be the event of the proposed application is still uncertain. We ought therefore to be, still, upon our guard and watchful to seize the first favourable opportunity to gain our object. In order to this, our Union should be as perfect and lasting as possible. We propose, that Societies should be formed, in convenient Districts, in every part of the Western Country, who shall preserve a correspondence, upon this and every other subject of general concern. By means of these Societies we shall be enabled speedily to know what may be the result of our endeavours, to consult upon such further measures, as may be necessary, to preserve Union, and finally by these means to secure success.

Remember that it is a common cause, which ought to unite us, that, that cause is indubitably just, that ourselves and posterity are interested, that the Crisis is favourable, and that it is only by Union, that the object can be achieved. The obstacles are great, and so ought to be our efforts; Adverse fortune may attend us, but it shall never dispirit us. We may for a while exhaust our Wealth and Strength, but until the all important object is procured, we pledge ourselves to you, and let us all pledge ourselves to each other, that our Perseverance and our firmness will be inexhaustable.

JOHN BRECKINRIDGE

Chairman

December 13th 1793.

Teste	}	Clks.
Thomas Todd		
Thomas Bodley		